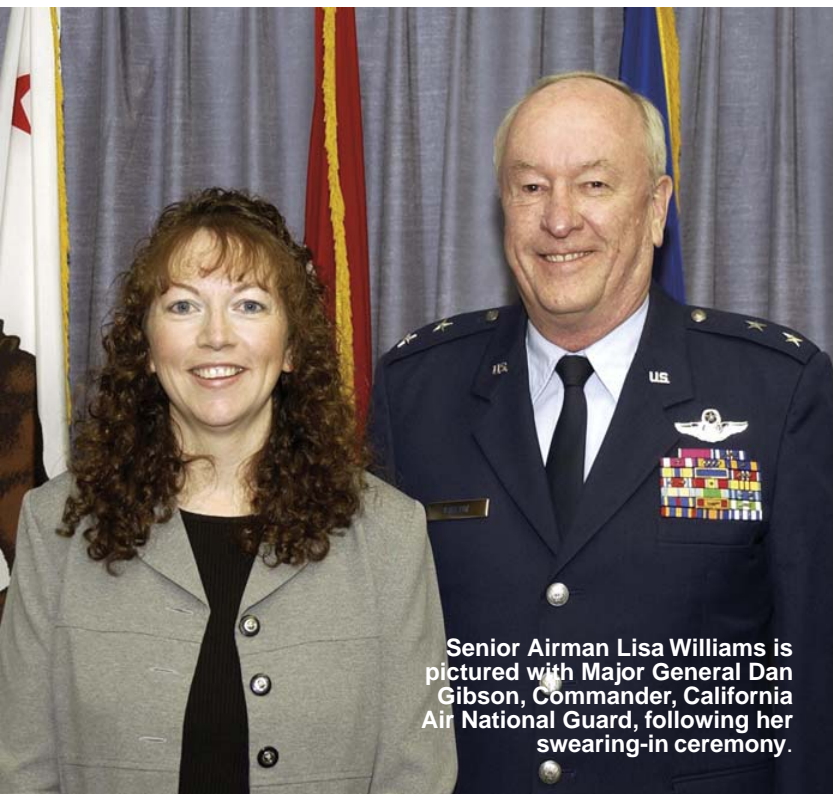


Back & Blue



Senior Airman Lisa Williams is pictured with Major General Dan Gibson, Commander, California Air National Guard, following her swearing-in ceremony.

**By Captain Anni Mu Loeb
Headquarters, CA ANG**

When terrorists hijacked commercial airliners and crashed them into the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon, they failed to accomplish their mission, because an act designed to instill fear, roused patriotism instead.

And Lisa Williams, executive secretary to Headquarters, California Air National Guard, responded. After a nearly 12-year layoff, Williams decided to rejoin the California Air National Guard on September 13, 2001.

That night her son, Bryan, 18, and five of his best friends were watching the news about the events of September 11th and discussing how they would not want to be in the military right now! They might get sent overseas.

"I hope people wake up and defend our country," Williams said. "Terrorists will keep coming back and you'll end up fighting them on our soil! I wish I could go back in, I'd fight."

The kids were silent. The next day Williams told an officer that she wanted to rejoin. The officer told her that she could come back in if she could accumulate 20 years service by age 60 and lose 75 pounds. Williams set her mind and body to the goal of joining the Air National Guard.

Nearly 19 months later and 75 pounds lighter, Lisa Williams became Senior Airman Williams. The events of September 11th, made her realize that she still had a lot to contribute to the military. After serving more than eight years on active duty, she separated in 1989. But the journey back wasn't easy and it required discipline, dedication, and commitment.

Williams attended a nutrition and physical conditioning class, joined "Weight Watchers," and participated in an exercise regimen. She started walking a few minutes two-to-three evenings a week. Williams graduated into running and now runs five-to six-days a week for about an hour. She realized her goal in 18 months. The next hurdles were to pass the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery, an entrance physical, and to find a military position. She accomplished both.

Williams' civilian boss, Major General Daniel Gibson, Commander, California Air National Guard, enlisted Senior Airman Williams during a special ceremony at the headquarters in April. Williams' husband, friends, and co-workers were there to support her. She is currently assigned to the 129th Rescue Wing, Moffett Federal Airfield, CA.

Williams' example has inspired other people. Of the six teenagers at Williams' house on September 13, 2001, two are now Marines assigned in the Middle East, one is in the Army, one is in the Air Force, and one in the Navy. 🐾